

IN THE CLAIMS:

The pending claims are as follows:

1. (Previously presented) A method for searching a document database, comprising:
 - receiving a search query;
 - returning a search result corresponding to the search query, including:
 - determining whether a query result corresponding to the search query is stored in a cache;
 - when the determining returns a negative result, generating a first search result in accordance with a first set of predetermined search criteria and returning as the search result at least a subset of the first search result;
 - when the determining returns a positive result:
 - accessing a reuse count of the cached search result; wherein the cached search result comprises a list of results that satisfy the search query, and the reuse count comprises a number of times that the list of results has been reused to respond to submissions of the search query;
 - when predefined conditions are satisfied, including the reuse count being larger than a predetermined threshold count, generating an improved search result in accordance with a second set of predetermined searching criteria including performing an additional search corresponding to the search query, and returning as the search result at least a subset of the improved search result; wherein the improved search result comprises an improved list of results that satisfy the search query; and
 - when the predefined conditions are not satisfied, returning as the search result at least a subset of the cached search result.

2. (Previously presented) A method for searching a document database, comprising:
 - receiving a search query;
 - returning a search result corresponding to the search query, including:
 - determining whether a search result corresponding to the search query is stored in a cache;
 - when the determining returns a negative result, generating a first search result in accordance with a first set of predetermined search criteria and returning as the search result at least a subset of the first search result;

when the determining returns a positive result:

accessing a reuse count of the cached search result, and determining a quality of the cached search result; wherein the cached search result comprises a list of results that satisfy the search query, and the reuse count comprises a number of times that the list of results has been reused to respond to submissions of the search query;

when the reuse count is less than or equal to a predetermined threshold count or a quality indication of the cached search result does not meet predefined criteria, returning as the search result at least a subset of the cached search result; and

when the reuse count is larger than the predetermined threshold count, and the quality indication meets the predefined criteria, generating an improved search result in accordance with a second set of predetermined search criteria using additional search resources, wherein the improved search result comprises an improved list of results that satisfy the search query, and returning as the search result at least a subset of the improved search result.

3. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2 further comprising:

updating the cache with the improved search result; and

updating the reuse count of the cached search result.

4. (Previously presented) The method of claim 3 further comprising:

when the reuse count is larger than the predetermined threshold count and the quality indication does not meet the predefined criteria and indicates that the cached search result is the improved search result corresponding to the search query, retrieving the improved search result from the cache; and

returning as the search result at least a subset of the improved search result.

5. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2, wherein:

when the quality indication has a first value, the cached search result is generated by searching only the document database; and

wherein the second set of search criteria comprises searching both the document database and an additional database.

6. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2, wherein:

when the quality indication has a first value, the cached search result is generated by searching the document database using a standard search depth; and

the second set of predetermined search criteria comprises searching the document database with a larger search depth than the standard search depth.

7. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2,

wherein the first set of search criteria comprises searching the document database using initial search criteria; and

wherein the second set of predetermined search criteria comprises searching the document database using modified search criteria distinct from the initial search criteria.

8. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2, wherein generating an improved search result comprises:

submitting the search query to one or more document identification and document servers in accordance with the second set of predetermined search criteria;

receiving search results from the one or more document identification and document servers; and

creating a search result list from the received search results.

9. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2 further comprising:

when the cache is determined not to have stored therein the search result corresponding to the search query:

generating a standard search result in accordance with the first set of predetermined search criteria;

storing the standard search result in the cache;

setting the reuse count of the cached search result to an initial value; and

returning at least a subset of the standard search result.

10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 9, wherein generating the standard search result comprises:

submitting the search query to one or more document identification and document servers in accordance with the first set of predetermined search criteria;

receiving search results from the one or more document identification and document servers; and

creating a search result list from the received search results.

11. (Previously presented) The method of claim 9, further comprising:
if the reuse count is less than or equal to the predetermined threshold count:
 retrieving the standard search result from the cache; and
 returning at least a subset of the standard search result.
12. (Previously presented) A system for searching a document database, comprising:
 a cache for storing search results corresponding to previously processed search queries;
 a search controller including one or more computer programs containing instructions for:
 determining whether a search result corresponding to a specified search query is stored in the cache; and
 returning a search result corresponding to the search query, including:
 when the determining returns a negative result, generating a first search result corresponding to the search query in accordance with a first set of predetermined search criteria and returning as the search result at least a subset of the first search result;
 when the determining returns a positive result:
 accessing a reuse count of the cached search result; wherein the cached search result comprises a list of results that satisfy the search query, and the reuse count comprises a number of times that the list of results has been reused to respond to submissions of the search query;
 when predefined conditions are satisfied, including the reuse count being larger than a predetermined threshold count, generating an improved search result in accordance with a second set of predetermined searching criteria including performing an additional search corresponding to the search query, wherein the improved search result comprises an improved list of results that satisfy the search query, and returning at least a subset of the improved search result as the search result; and
 when the predefined conditions are not satisfied, returning as the search result at least a subset of the cached search result.

13. (Previously presented) A system for searching a document database, comprising:
a cache for storing search results corresponding to previously processed search queries;
a search controller including one or more computer programs containing instructions for:
determining whether a search result corresponding to a specified search query is stored in the cache;
returning a search result corresponding to the search query, including:
when the determining returns a negative result, generating a first search result corresponding to the search query in accordance with a first set of predetermined search criteria and returning as the search result at least a subset of the first search result;
when the determining returns a positive result:
accessing a reuse count of the cached search result and determining a quality of the cached search result; wherein the cached search result comprises a list of results that satisfy the search query, and the reuse count comprises a number of times that the list of results has been reused to respond to submissions of the search query;
when the reuse count is less than or equal to a predetermined threshold count or a quality indication of the cached search result does not meet predefined criteria, returning as the search result at least a subset of the cached search result; and
when the reuse count is larger than the predetermined threshold count and the quality indication meets the predefined criteria, generating an improved search result in accordance with a second set of predetermined search criteria using additional search resources, wherein the improved search result comprises an improved list of results that satisfy the search query, and returning at least a subset of the improved search result as the search result.

14. (Previously presented) The system of claim 13, wherein the search results in the cache comprise:

identifications of documents;

contents of portions of documents corresponding to at least a subset of the identifications of documents; and

parameters of documents corresponding to the identifications of documents;

15. (Previously presented) The system of claim 13 further comprising instructions for:
 updating the cache with the improved search result; and
 updating the reuse count of the cached search result.

16. (Previously presented) The system of claim 15 further comprising instructions for:
 if the reuse count is larger than the predetermined threshold count and the quality indication does not meet the predefined criteria and indicates that the query result stored in the cache is the improved search result corresponding to the search query, retrieving the improved search result from the cache; and
 returning as the search result at least a subset of the improved search result.

17. (Previously presented) The system of claim 13, wherein:
 when the quality indication has a first value, the cached search result is generated by searching only the document database; and
 the second set of predetermined search criteria comprises searching both the document database and an additional database.

18. (Previously presented) The system of claim 13, wherein:
 when the quality indication has a first value, the cached search result is generated by searching the document database using a standard search depth; and
 the second set of predetermined search criteria comprises searching the document database with a larger search depth than the standard search depth.

19. (Previously presented) The system of claim 13,
 wherein the first set of search criteria comprises searching the document database using initial search criteria; and
 wherein the second set of predetermined search criteria comprises searching the document database using modified search criteria distinct from the initial search criteria.

20. (Previously presented) The system of claim 13, wherein generating an improved search result comprises instructions for:

submitting the search query to one or more document identification and document servers in accordance with the second set of predetermined search criteria;

receiving search results from the one or more document identification and document servers; and

creating a search result list from the received search results.

21. (Previously presented) The system of claim 13, the computer programs of the search controller further comprising instructions for:

when the cache is determined not to have stored therein search results corresponding to the search query:

generating a standard search result in accordance with the first set of predetermined search criteria;

storing the standard search result in the cache;

setting the reuse count of the cached search result to an initial value; and
returning at least a subset of the standard search result.

22. (Previously presented) The system of claim 21, wherein the instructions for generating the standard search result comprise instructions for:

submitting the search query to one or more document identification and document servers in accordance with the first set of predetermined searching criteria;

receiving search results from the one or more document identification and document servers; and

creating a search result list from the received search results.

23. (Previously presented) The system of claim 21, the computer programs of the search controller further comprising instructions for:

when the reuse count is less than or equal to the predetermined threshold count:

retrieving the standard search result from the cache; and

returning at least a subset of the standard search result.

24. (Previously presented) The system of claim 13 , including:

one or more interface modules for receiving a search query;

one or more storage modules for storing document identifications and the corresponding documents to be searched;

wherein the search controller is configured to generate the improved search result by searching at least a subset of the stored document identifications.

25. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 updating the cached search result with the improved search result.
26. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2, further comprising:
 updating the cached search result with the improved search result.
27. (Previously presented) The system of claim 12, further comprising instructions for updating the cached search result with the improved search result.
28. (Previously presented) The system of claim 13, further comprising instructions for updating the cached search result with the improved search result.
29. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2, wherein generating the improved search result includes searching both the document database and an additional database.
30. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2, wherein generating the improved search result includes searching the document database to a larger search depth than a search depth used in generating the first search result.
31. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2, wherein generating the improved search result includes searching using modified search criteria distinct from the initial search criteria.